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EDUCATIONAL WORK IN TENNESSEE

By DR. CHARLES W. DABNEY, President of the University of Tennessee.

The relation of school funds to population in Tennessee is most instructive. The annual appropriation for public schools is 46 cents on each \$100 of taxable property reported and 86 cents per caput of total population. Figures for some other states are given for comparison: Missouri, 42 cents and \$2.50; Minnesota, 59 cents and \$3.20; Nebraska, \$2.32 and \$4.12; Colorado, \$1.05 and \$5.18; California, 58 cents and \$4.65; New York, 60 cents and \$4.60; Illinois, \$2.08 and \$3.68. It will be seen that these states pay much more for their schools in proportion to their taxable wealth and several times more in proportion to their population than does Tennessee.

The amount expended for schools per caput for children between the ages of five and twenty is in Tennessee \$2.32; in Kentucky, \$2.32; Texas, \$3.63; Minnesota, \$8.63; Michigan, \$8.90; Ohio, \$9.94; New York, \$10.91; Colorado, \$11.11; California, \$16.44; Massachusetts, \$17.79. Massachusetts pays thus nearly eight times as much for the common school education of each of her children as does Tennessee.

An important factor is the amount of taxable property per caput of school children. For each child between the ages of five and twenty years there is in Tennessee \$509 of taxable property, in North Carolina \$337, in Georgia \$516, but in Iowa it is \$714, in Missouri \$1,982, in Michigan \$1,996, in New York \$2,661.

Probably our friends in the North do not properly appreciate the difficulties and burdens resulting from our double system of schools. An average county in Tennessee has, for instance, twenty-five school children to the square mile, fifteen white and ten colored, making practically two counties, each having a small population. Consolidation is thus more necessary in the South than anywhere else.

In conclusion, a few things which seem most needed in our work should be mentioned.

1. Men and money to do more missionary work among poorer and more isolated populations. The people in one-half of the

counties of the South are probably not able to support any kind of a decent school, even if they knew how to do so. They must first be taught the farm and household arts, how to cultivate the soil properly, how to utilize their forest and other resources and so to make money with which to maintain their schools. In that great territory covering the Appalachian region, reaching from Virginia to Alabama, there is a great population of healthy, vigorous and noble people, our brothers in blood, or "our contemporary ancestors," as President Frost has so aptly called them, which this board has scarcely touched. In the mountain counties of Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia and Alabama there are already, out of one million white males twenty-one years of age, nearly two hundred thousand who cannot read and write. The people of the better counties east and west of the mountains have all they can do for a generation or more to develop their own schools. The burning question is, shall we permit another generation of these mountain boys and girls to grow up in ignorance? Probably we cannot do much for the people of this generation, but because we must let them pass away, shall we let another generation grow up in poverty and ignorance? These are our brethren, fellow-citizens of these states and of the great republic. The appeal is therefore to the whole nation. How dare we permit so large a portion of our fellow-citizens to live any longer under these conditions?

2. There are needed a few model consolidated industrial schools scattered over the South. Our people do not know what a good country school is; they have no ideals towards which to work. If there were even three or four such schools in each state, properly located, where superintendents and directors could visit them, they would, we believe, multiply themselves very rapidly.

3. Teachers for the schools. There are almost no professional teachers in the country schools. There must be normal schools for elementary teachers; several of them in each state to train country boys and girls to be teachers in the rural schools.

4. Superintendents, men competent to direct educational work, to organize and administer schools, educational engineers of all grades and classes, are greatly needed, as well as principals of schools and supervisors of technical and industrial education, manual training, domestic science and art and the other newer branches. The greatest need of the South after all is a great teachers' college,

which shall educate and train the men and women who are to be the leaders in this work and the directors in the Southern schools of the future.

The time is come for constructive work, and we must educate the men to do it.

We must recognize the present wretched condition of our schools and the great difficulties resulting from our poverty and sparse population, but let us recognize also the advantages of having a field clear of the rubbish of false systems, of a great country of excellent natural resources and filled with a race of men who have never yet failed to build great, splendid institutions when they got ready to the task. Let us take courage from this great awakening and look forward hopefully to the time, which is surely coming, when the South shall have such a system of schools that our Northern friends will have to come down South to learn how to organize the modern school, and when we shall be making peaceful invasions into the North and helping them hold conferences of education for the improvement of their schools.